



OFFICE OF BUSINESS AND WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

JANUARY 2006

Local Clergy, Trade Unions, and the Construction Industry Honored at IDOT Stakeholders Luncheon

By Kevin A. Gettis



On October 5, 2005, the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) Office of Business and Workforce Diversity (OBWD), along with Southern Illinois Builders Association, Southwestern Illinois Building & Construction Trades Council, and District 8 Clergy Task Force sponsored the Stakeholders Working Together Luncheon. The purpose of the luncheon was multi-faceted.

Local clergy, trade unions, and the construction industry were honored for their efforts in addressing the need for more minorities in the workforce. As a result of this partnership, local trade unions and contractors donated \$30,000 to sponsor the training of 32 minorities for the road construction industry slated to start October 2005,

at the East St. Louis Higher Learning Center. The luncheon, which was held at IDOT's new full-service DBE Resource Center located at 225 North Ninth Street in E. St. Louis, was well attended.

Among those in attendance were State Senator James F. Clayborne, Paul Cerpa, OBWD Director, Tyrone Pace, OBWD Deputy Director, Dave Foree, Southwestern Illinois Building and Construction Trades Council, Tim Moore, Southern Illinois Builders Association, Jim Moore, Southwestern Illinois College, and Reverends Sharon Smith and Rose Booker-Jones, both of the District 8 Clergy Task Force.

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A Small Contractor's View

By Sammy Hobson, Epic Construction Services Inc., Peoria

For many contractors working on Upgrade I-74, the project means much more than a new and improved roadway. As a local small contractor, I can tell you that starting a business isn't easy – between start up costs, bonding requirements and overhead.

IDOT is helping my company and many other minority-owned firms through the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program to gain access to numerous construction contracts through its Targeted Assistance

Program. I received training and assistance from IDOT and other contractors to prepare my company to do business with the state.

As the contracts for Stage III of Upgrade I-74 are finalized, my business stands to receive a contract that is more than three times larger than any other work that we have ever done. Without Governor Blagojevich and IDOT's commitment to DBE contractors, we never would have had this opportunity to grow and be successful.

District 5 Update

By Ronald S. Brown

The IDOT DBE Program provides contracting opportunities for minority and women owned construction companies on highway construction projects. Over the course of the past year, District 5 has been working with the University of Illinois in an effort to increase outreach and community inclusion with the DBE Program. In the Spring of 2005, the district participated in an ad hoc focus group facilitated by the University of Illinois construction department. Sharing common concerns, as well as a commitment to minority contractors in the area, partnering was seen as an effective way to achieve goals by combining resources. With the recent increase in IDOT's contracting goal for DBE participation, our goal was to identify concerns brought forth by the minority contracting community and to address those concerns through classes and training seminars. This partnership is in its infancy, but plans include organizing a network of participants representing a cross-section of experience and knowledge in heavy highway construction to assist in facilitating training seminars for DBE contractors. This will help them to grow and build capacity.

The past few construction seasons have been increasingly challenging for contractors and their efforts to recruit and retain qualified minority and female employees due to the high turnover rate in the construction industry, combined with the lack of apprentices. Over the past 18 months, IDOT has worked with the Workforce Development Board (WDB) in Champaign to provide opportunities for skills assessment and training for minorities and women in the East Central Illinois area. The WDB is a group of public agencies and private sector employers/partners that oversee the workforce network of agencies. The WDB also works with businesses and community organizations to advocate workforce development in the East Central Illinois area. Local building trade organizations, Parkland College, area contractors and IDOT assisted in securing grant funds through the Critical Skills Shortages Initiative (CSSI) program for a construction and manufacturing open entry/open exit program that is administered through Parkland College. The CSSI program is administered by the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. Recently, IDOT was accepted as a new member of the WDB and will continue to partner with local building trade organizations to provide apprenticeship opportunities in the area.

FLAGGER CERTIFICATION TRAINING IN DISTRICT 8

By Lee A. Coleman

Most of you have seen those brave men and women who appear at virtually every road construction site throughout Illinois. These brave people hold yellow and red signs admonishing drivers to slow down or stop, and control traffic for the safety of motorists and workers at Illinois highway work zones. This is a dangerous job that requires extensive training. A three-year certification is awarded to those who successfully complete the training. The aforementioned individuals are called flaggers. As a result of extensive outreach on the part of District 8 and Target Group Inc. (IDOT supportive service consultant); 54 individuals successfully completed the four-hour flagger certification course at the District 8 DBE Resource Center in East St. Louis, Illinois.



The courses took place during the months of October and November of 2005. The participants came from various cities from the District 8 area, such as Venice, Centreville, Lovejoy and East St. Louis. The next step for the recently certified flaggers is job placement. Target Group Inc., job placement consultant for District 8, will handle the task of getting these new workers placed on jobs. IDOT Secretary Tim Martin and Paul Cerpa, Director of the Office of Business and Workforce Diversity, express their congratulations to those individuals who successfully completed the training.



District Seven Outreach Efforts

Felipe Martin, Illinois Laborers-Employers Cooperation and Education Trust (LECET) and John W. Shrum (District Seven DBE Liaison Officer) are working in Centralia and Mt. Vernon to recruit more minorities to join the construction trades industry. They are working with the local union halls to provide opportunities to minorities as operators, laborers, carpenters and cement finishers. Recruitment efforts continue through their work with local area church groups and community centers.

There were two minority individuals from the Centralia area who were interested in the Operators Local 841 Training Center. Tiesha Matthews and Darwin Fawson (pictured right with operator trainer, Donnie Wirth) started their heavy equipment training in Terre Haute, Indiana in November of 2005. This training, along with a contractor's letter of intent to hire, will lead to an opportunity for them to begin the operators' apprenticeship program in the Spring of 2006.



There are many more opportunities for minorities in the Region 4, District 7 area. Persons interested in training with local unions need a valid driver's license and a minimum of a G.E.D. equivalent in education. Anyone interested should contact John Shrum, District 7 DBE Liaison Officer, at (217) 342-8300.

New SBE Compliance Section Manager Named

Mark Bennett was recently promoted to the compliance section manager position. Mark has over 29 years of service with the department and has been with the Bureau of Small Business Enterprises (SBE) since 1987. Mark started in the certification section as an analyst before moving over to the then supportive services section, where he was responsible for the DBE training workshops, public information material, the annual conference and the bureau's newsletter. In 1999, Mark began working in the compliance section as a labor compliance specialist, where his duties included labor compliance, EEO/DBE monitoring and OJT efforts.

In August of 2003, Mark was named acting field unit manager and began to wear many different hats. The bureau was deeply impacted by the Early Retirement Initiative (ERI) when six employees, five of them managers; opted to take advantage of the offer. As Mark indicates "it's been pretty much off to the races since."

While acting field unit manager, Mark was involved in several new initiatives and accomplishments, including EEO sanctions for failure to demonstrate commitments to

good faith efforts, DBE field monitoring and a record number of compliance reviews, as well as the elimination of supply credit for liquid asphalt.

When asked to elaborate on the ERI impact, Mark stated, "This experience really laid a firm foundation for action. Without the other managerial levels in place, the decision-making process became much shorter and the responsibility became more concentrated. We no longer had the luxury of the chain of command so to speak, everything just seemed to get tossed in your lap. We didn't have a bureau chief or section manager and contractors, both DBEs and primes, needed answers and help." Mark also added he thought what SBE experienced was also experienced department-wide, to some degree.

Mark closed by stating we (in SBE) have all become combat veterans and he believes this experience will serve him well as he assumes the duties of section manager.

Proposed Amendments to the Rules for Prequalification of Contractors

IDOT is proposing to amend the 44 IL. Adm. Code Section 650 – Rules for Prequalification of Contractors and Issuance of Plans and Proposals to revise and update provisions to reflect current practice, to address poor contractor performance, to increase competition, and to potentially increase the number of prequalified small businesses. Among the significant changes:

- The web address (www.dot.il.gov) has been added for electronic access to the application for prequalification.
- The cut-off dates in advance of IDOT lettings and when a Certificate of Eligibility becomes effective will be clarified for first time applicants or a renewal applicant seeking to renew its existing ratings.
- Adding several provisions to the listing of reasons or events that will result in a finding of non-responsibility. The first is when an applicant has been suspended or debarred by operations of Section 25 of the Procurement of Domestic Products Act [30 ILCS 517/25]. The second is for any violation of any provision of the Illinois Procurement Code [30 ILCS 500].
- The un-audited status will have two levels. The first will limit the financial rating to no more than \$500,000 when a balance sheet is prepared by the applicant. The second will limit the financial rating to no more than \$1,500,000 when the applicant submits a reviewed or compiled balance sheet that has been prepared by an accountant.
- Eliminate the provision that would restrict an applicant from becoming prequalified in an un-audited status, if they have been awarded more than \$600,000 in contracts during a 12-month period.
- When an applicant submits an equipment appraisal that includes only the fair market value, the value will be discounted 20 percent when utilized in the calculation of an applicant's financial rating.
- A new category will be added to the Execution of Work section of the Contractor Performance Evaluation. The new category is the contractor's ability to meet quality control/quality assurance (QC/QA) plan established by contract for materials production/construction quality control.
- A new provision has been added that allows the department to revoke a contractor's work rating when the contractor receives a Quality of Work rating of two for any work category being evaluated.
- The applicant will no longer be required to obtain a long term lease to become prequalified in a majority of categories except for those categories requiring special equipment or a plant. However, the applicant will need to fill out an Affidavit of Equipment Availability form stating that they have an agreement with a leasing or rental agency that equipment is available once the applicant has been awarded a contract.
- The work categories 005 – Miscellaneous Bituminous Paving; and 017 – Miscellaneous Concrete Construction will be renamed to 005 – Bituminous Paving and 017 – Concrete Construction respectively.
- Creating one pavement marking category that includes paint, thermoplastic, epoxy, and polyurea.

Before the department can implement these proposed amendments, they must first be sent to the Procurement Board and the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR) for review and approval. The JCAR process allows for two 45-day public review periods.

THE BUREAU OF CIVIL RIGHTS DIVERSIFIED ACHIEVEMENTS GARNERS HIGH PRAISE FOR IDOT

Dave Dailey, ADA Specialist in the Bureau of Civil Rights, has been quite active and successful in assisting persons with disabilities. His success has garnered statewide recognition for himself, as well as for IDOT. Dave's efforts on behalf of persons with disabilities have resulted in the placing of a permanent full-time engineer in the Bureau of Bridges & Structures, two winter technicians in the Bureau of Design and Environment, a permanent full-time photogrammetrist in the Aerial Surveys Section of the Bureau of Design and Environment, and one winter technician in the Division of Traffic Safety.

Dave received special recognition from the United Cerebral Palsy Land of Lincoln for his continued efforts in gaining employment for persons with disabilities. Because of Dave's success and achievements, IDOT was named Employer of the Year by United Cerebral Palsy Land of Lincoln. Other recognition awards for IDOT are as follows:

1. The Department of Human Services, Office of Rehabilitation Services presented IDOT with its ongoing support certificate for its continued placements within the department.

2. The Illinois Department of Human Rights and the Illinois State Rehabilitation Council have both highlighted IDOT as one of the leading agencies in assisting persons with disabilities in the area of employment and accommodation.
3. IDOT was also highlighted by the Interagency Committee of Employees with Disabilities as one of the lead agencies within the state serving persons with disabilities. Dave has also been very active in addressing safety hazards to provide easy and safe passage for persons with disabilities. He has also been successful in gaining support from other state agencies to obtain job coaches and other accommodations to assist those needing such support to gain and maintain employment.

IDOT's partnership with the Department of Rehabilitation Services and the United Cerebral Palsy Land of Lincoln will be highlighted on the United Cerebral Palsy Telethon January 29th. This will include film footage showing IDOT employees with disabilities in the work place and illustrating the department's commitment to inclusion of persons with disabilities. Be sure to tune in as Dave will be appearing in his starring role.

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An audience of over 25 listened to comments of praise made by guest speakers acknowledging IDOT's commitment to diversity and the department's contributions toward growth and self-sufficiency for minority and women owned businesses. In addition, many speakers expressed their gratitude to moderator, Lee A. Coleman, II, District 8 DBE Liaison, for his diligence in bringing the stakeholders together for the greater good of the community.

A highlight of the luncheon was a report by Jim Moore, Director of Industrial Technology at Southwestern Illinois College (SWIC), on the progress and success of the Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program. Mr. Moore enthusiastically stated that the SWIC program averaged 50 students per year with approximately an 80 percent success rate.

The luncheon concluded with an official presentation of the check for \$30,000 from Dave Foree to Jim Moore.



Dave Foree of the Southern Illinois Building and Construction Trades Council and Tim Garvey of the Southern Illinois Builders Association present a check for \$30,000.00 to Jim Moore of Southwestern Illinois College, as Sharon Smith, Senator Clayborne, and Director Cerpa look on.

Since the program has an operating budget of only \$36,000 per year, Mr. Moore is optimistic and encouraged by the contribution of \$30,000 by local trade unions and contractors. This cooperative effort will pay the costs for holding three additional training classes.

District 4 Offers More Training Classes to DBE Contractors

By Derek C. Parish, District Materials Engineer, Division of Highways District 4

For several years, District 4 has offered training classes to DBE contractors each winter. This year, District 4 will once again be offering a series of training classes on various topics. The instructors will come from the district's staff and its supportive services. The topics being considered for this winter are:

- Preparation of Force Account Bills
- Smart Construction
- Mentor/Protégé Relationships
- Capacity Building/Diversification of Business (Looking at future potential DBE pay items)
- Contracts/Legal Issues
- Bonding & Finance
- Crack Control
- Equipment Leasing

Other topics we have given classes on in the past include:

- Erosion Control/Landscaping/Seeding
- Storm Sewer/Culverts/Drainage
- Documentation/Materials Certification Documentation

The classes are offered in the District 4 training room on Saturday mornings over the winter when contractors are not busy working. We try to vary the topics each year and usually provide at least one week off between classes. The

district maintains flexibility for holding various classes and is willing to repeat classes on any topic as needed. Also, any other topics may be requested by contractors for consideration. The classes have a tentative start date of January 14, 2006, while details are being finalized. Anyone who has questions may call Mike George at (309) 671-3668. Classes will be approximately every other Saturday morning from January – March in the District Four training room.

Attendance at these classes has been very good over the years. The people who have attended the classes have found the information to be valuable, and their productivity has increased as a result. The classes also give the attendees the opportunity to network with IDOT personnel that they might not otherwise meet in person. This makes them more comfortable, and more likely to call those individuals when questions come up during the construction season. This ensures that the work is being done correctly and the needed documentation is being provided in order to avoid problems later. These connections to IDOT personnel have also resulted in referrals for some of them to the department's consultants when site clearing and preparation has been necessary for geotechnical investigations and surveying. The district feels that these training classes have been beneficial to everyone and will continue to try to offer new topics each winter.

GENERAL CONSTRUCTION CLASSES COMPLETED IN DISTRICT 8

By Lee A. Coleman

Historically, there has been a shortage of minorities in the road construction trades. In response to the aforementioned situation, IDOT Secretary Tim Martin and OBWD Director Paul Cerpa made it a priority that IDOT assist more minorities into the trades. To that end, District 8 and job training consultant, LECET held an 80-hour general construction course this year and graduated 62 young men and women. The participants in this course represented various communities in the District 8 area. This 80-hour course included, but was not limited to the following:

- The history of organized labor
- Introduction to apprenticeships
- Reporting to union halls
- Reporting to work on time
- Work ethic
- Communications/attitude/human relations
- Basic math
- Measurements
- Tool recognition
- Hands on project.

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LECET coordinated with the Southwestern Illinois College to train and graduate 15 trainees from the general construction classes in May of 2005. Those classes were held on the campus of the East St. Louis Illinois Higher Learning Center. The classes were conducted by Southwestern Illinois College. LECET also collaborated with Lewis and Clark College in Alton, Illinois to train and graduate 15 general construction students in October 2005.

Some of the graduates of the general construction classes were part of a unique partnership formed between the local trade unions, Southern Illinois Builders Association, local clergy and IDOT's District 8 EEO staff. Early this year, District 8 formed a task force with the local clergy, trade unions, and construction industry. The goal of this task force was to encourage more minorities to get into the workforce. The task force met every month, discussing strategies that would make District 8's workforce more diverse. As a result of these meetings, the trade unions and

the construction industry agreed to pay tuition in the amount of \$32,000.00 to Southwestern Illinois College for an eight-week long general construction course to train 32 new candidates from within the district.

It must be noted that these classes were not meant to be the panacea for the problems concerning the lack of minorities in the District 8 workforce. The purpose of these classes was to introduce the students to the construction industry. IDOT understands that the next step for these general construction students is to become enrolled in an apprenticeship program of their choice. A student having had these classes should fair better than an individual who wishes to become a road construction worker and has not had this exposure. We are happy to report that seven of the general construction class graduates were recently accepted into the carpenters' union apprenticeship program.

